



Distr.: General
29 April 2022

Original: English



**2022 United Nations Conference to Support the
Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14:
Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and
marine resources for sustainable development**

Lisbon, 27 June–1 July 2022

Item 9 of the provisional agenda*

Interactive dialogues

**Interactive dialogue 4: Making fisheries sustainable and
providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine
resources and markets**

Concept paper prepared by the Secretariat

Summary

The present concept paper was prepared pursuant to paragraph 23 of General Assembly resolution [73/292](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General of the 2022 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development to prepare concept papers on each of the themes of the interactive dialogues, taking into account the relevant ocean-related processes of the Assembly and other possible contributions. The present paper relates to interactive dialogue 4, entitled “Making fisheries sustainable and providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets”. In the paper, the status, trends, challenges and opportunities for the achievement of relevant targets of Sustainable Development Goal 14 are set out, under the overarching theme of the Conference: “Scaling up ocean action based on science and innovation for the implementation of Goal 14: stocktaking, partnerships and solutions”.

* [A/CONF.230/2022/1](#).



I. Introduction

1. Covering 70 per cent of the Earth's surface, and with virtually all of the planet's water, the oceans are home to 80 per cent of the world's biota, with a higher diversity of living organisms than terrestrial ecosystems. They provide essential benefits and resources for human food security and nutrition, culture, health, and economic development. The contribution of the oceans to the global economy is projected to grow to \$3 trillion by 2030.¹ More than 3 billion people rely on the oceans for their livelihoods, and over 80 per cent of world trade is transported by sea.² Small-scale fisheries account for about 90 per cent of primary marine fisheries employment, which highlights how Sustainable Development Goal 14 is connected to other Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goals 1 to 5, 8, 10, 12, 13 and 17. Wild capture inland fisheries, while crucial to food security and livelihoods for hundreds of millions of people, are undervalued, overlooked and at increasing risk from environmental threats.³

2. Human stressors affect virtually the entire ocean, enabling climate change, habitat destruction, biodiversity loss, excessive nutrient loads, marine pollution, overfishing and other problems, such as irresponsible tourism.⁴ Climate change increases the intensity and frequency of natural hazards, ocean warming, acidity and deoxygenation, and it causes shifts in the distribution and abundance of fish populations, adversely affecting fishery-dependent developing countries.⁵

3. Fisheries are integral to sustainable development under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.⁶ The fisheries sector is covered in 3 of the 13 categories of oceans-dependent goods, services and energy industries identified by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (marine fisheries, aquaculture and hatcheries, and seafood processing).⁷ Fishing represents one of the largest maritime industries, involving an estimated 59.51 million people.⁸ In 2017, the world fishing fleet consisted of about 4.5 million vessels, with just under one third composed of unpowered vessels.⁹ But since 1995, the fisheries sector has changed significantly,¹⁰ requiring further action based on science, innovation and the strengthening of the science-policy interface.

¹ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), *Advancing the Potential of Sustainable Ocean-Based Economies: Trade Trends, Market Drivers and Market Access – A First Assessment* (2021); and United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Promotion and Strengthening of Sustainable Ocean-based Economies: Sustainable Development Goal 14* (2021).

² See A/76/311.

³ Simon Funge-Smith, *Review of the State of the World Fishery Resources: Inland Fisheries*, (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)).

⁴ Martin R. Stuchtey and others, *Ocean Solutions That Benefit People, Nature and the Economy – Report of the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy*, World Resources Institute, 2020, p. 4; and SECORE International, “Giving coral reefs a future”.

⁵ *The Second World Ocean Assessment, vol. I* (United Nations publication, 2021); and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *The Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate: A Special Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (2019), chap. 5.

⁶ FAO, *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020: Sustainability in Action* (2020).

⁷ See A/76/311.

⁸ FAO, *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020*.

⁹ *The Second World Ocean Assessment, vol. II* (United Nations publication, 2021).

¹⁰ FAO, “2021 COFI declaration for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture”, available at www.fao.org/3/cb3767en/cb3767en.pdf.

II. Status and trends

A. Target 14.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals

4. Target 14.4 of the Goals was partially missed. Fish stocks have continued to decline,¹¹ although the trend is slowing down. Biologically sustainable fish stocks decreased to 65.8 per cent in 2017, while 34.2 per cent of stocks are fished at biologically unsustainable levels.¹² Overfishing leads to an annual loss of \$88.9 billion in net benefits.¹³ Due to insufficient data, only about 50 per cent of the global catch comes from scientifically assessed stocks.¹⁴

5. International instruments, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, oblige States to sustainably manage fisheries. Ending overfishing and rebuilding depleted resources could increase fish yields up to 20 per cent.¹⁵ Appropriate fisheries governance reforms could rebuild overfished stocks in less than 10 years, allowing for 98 per cent of overfished stocks to be considered healthy by the middle of the century. However, global climate change impacts on marine ecosystems could impede progress, as climatic drivers and overfishing interact synergistically, creating an impact on some fish stocks and their catches and affecting fishery-dependent developing States more severely.¹⁶

6. Marine fisheries constitute 88 per cent of global fish catches, with about 50 per cent of the world's total fish supply coming from aquaculture. Fish provide approximately 17 per cent of the global population's intake of animal protein.¹⁷ Global fish production reached about 179 million tons in 2020, directly employing about 59 million people.¹⁸ Global food fish consumption increased by 3.1 per cent on average annually from 1961 to 2017, providing more than 3.3 billion people with at least 20 per cent of their average per capita intake of animal protein.¹⁹

7. Fisheries and aquaculture products remain among the most traded food commodities globally. About 35–38 per cent of total fisheries and aquaculture production is exported, valued at \$173 billion annually.²⁰ Between 1976 and 2019, trade increased 6.6 per cent annually in nominal terms and 4.1 per cent in real terms.²¹ Between 2009 and 2020, fisheries-sector-related notifications by members of the

¹¹ FAO, "Sustainable Development Goals indicators", 2021, available at www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals/indicators/14.4.1/en/.

¹² FAO, *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020*.

¹³ *The Second World Ocean Assessment, vol. II* (United Nations publication, 2021).

¹⁴ FAO maintains methodologies for assessing stocks and invests resources to develop new methods that are applicable to data-limited and capacity-poor fisheries to provide global estimates of fisheries' sustainability over time.

¹⁵ UNCTAD, *Advancing the Potential of Sustainable Ocean-Based Economies*; FAO, *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020*; and Sandra Cordon, "Oceans "not yet beyond repair", but getting closer", Landscape News, 11 May 2021, available at <https://news.globallandscapesforum.org/52281/second-world-ocean-assessment-on-critical-state-of-oceans/>.

¹⁶ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in Changing Climate*, 2019, chap. 5; and *The Second World Ocean Assessment, vols. I and II* (United Nations publication, 2021).

¹⁷ UNCTAD, *Advancing the Potential of Sustainable Ocean-Based Economies*.

¹⁸ FAO, Updated figures generated for the eighteenth session of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade, April and June 2022.

¹⁹ FAO, *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020*.

²⁰ FAO, Updated figures generated for the eighteenth session of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade, April and June 2022.

²¹ FAO, *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020*; UNCTAD, *Advancing the Potential of Sustainable Ocean-Based Economies*; and FAO, Fishery and aquaculture statistics 2019.

World Trade Organization (WTO) included 845 measures notified and 819 trade policy review entries, with 681 measures specifically on sustainable fisheries management.²²

8. The target of ending illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing by 2020 was not achieved. Such fishing remains one of the greatest threats to marine ecosystems, undermining sustainable fisheries management and marine biodiversity conservation efforts, threatening livelihoods, exacerbating poverty, and augmenting food insecurity.²³ It is estimated to account for 20 per cent of the world's catch (up to 50 per cent in some areas).²⁴

9. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing weakens fisheries governance and contributes to illicit trade in seafood. Such fishing is also often an indicator of other types of crime at sea, including labour and human rights violations, money laundering, drug trafficking, migrant smuggling, and tax fraud.²⁵ The diversion of fish from legitimate trade led to estimated worldwide annual economic losses to States of from \$26 billion to \$50 billion and tax revenue losses of from \$2 billion to \$4 billion.²⁶

10. The Sustainable Development Goals adopted in 2015 included the elimination of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and in 2016, the Port State Measures Agreement entered into force. Although illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is condemned in virtually every nation, many countries are falling short on monitoring and penalizing such fishing and eliminating subsidies.²⁷

11. Legal, policy and management tools and measures, with varying levels of enforcement, have been used at national, regional and international levels to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Efforts are moving in the right direction to achieve targets 14.4 and 14.6 of the Goals, although with some delay. States and organizations are focusing on cooperation and collaboration in order to approach illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in a holistic and complementary manner, such as through the Port State Measures Agreement (which had 70 States parties by January 2022). The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, and regional fisheries management organizations have undertaken many activities over the last decade to address illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, including a global review of trans-shipment regulations. Practices and control mechanisms, as well as technical guidelines, were used to estimate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and the capacity development necessary to implement the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement and the Port State Measures Agreement and to integrate the ecosystems and precautionary approaches.²⁸

²² WTO Environmental Database, available at <https://edb.wto.org/>.

²³ FAO, *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020*.

²⁴ Martin R. Stuchtey and others, *Ocean Solutions That Benefit People, Nature and the Economy – Report of the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy*, World Resources Institute, 2020, p. 4.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ *The Second World Ocean Assessment, vol. II* (United Nations publication, 2021).

²⁷ UNCTAD, *Advancing the Potential of Sustainable Ocean-Based Economies*.

²⁸ FAO, *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020*; FAO, “Sustainable Development Goals indicators”, 2021, available at www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals/indicators/14.4.1/en/; and FAO, “FAO inputs in relation to resolution 75/239 concerning oceans and the law of the sea for the report of the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session”, 14 June 2021. See also the Port State Measures Agreement, available at www.fao.org/port-state-measures/background/parties-psma/en/. At the One Ocean Summit, six States committed to ratifying the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Cape Town Agreement 2012 on fishing boat safety standards that will enter into force by October 2022; two more States committed to ratifying the Port State Measures Agreement; and several European Union member States committed to deploying their navies overseas to step up surveillance of illegal fishing.

B. Target 14.6 of the Sustainable Development Goals

12. Subsidies exacerbate problems of overcapacity and overfishing. They enable many fishing fleets to operate longer and farther at sea, to the detriment of marine life.²⁹ They are often a source of inequality and unfair competition against small-scale fishers.³⁰ Experts estimate that 54 per cent of high seas fishing grounds would be unprofitable if subsidies were eliminated.³¹ Academic estimates of total annual global fisheries subsidies in 2018 amount to about \$35 billion, including about \$22 billion in capacity-enhancing subsidies.³²

13. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) measures direct and indirect fisheries support for 39 countries.³³ OECD data show that these countries' fisheries subsidies averaged \$12 billion annually between 2012 and 2014 and \$9.4 billion annually between 2015 and 2018 and have been increasing since 2016 (see figure I). Subsidies reduce the cost of inputs (predominantly fuel) and hence are most likely to increase capacity.³⁴

14. Capacity-enhancing subsidies can cause harm by reducing fishing costs, increasing catch, raising fishing revenues for the beneficiary, contributing to overfishing, compromising fish stock productivity and applying more stress to stocks of endangered species.³⁵

²⁹ WTO, "Twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference briefing note: state of play – 10 December 2021: negotiations on fisheries subsidies", available at www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/mc12_e/briefing_notes_e/bffish_e.htm.

³⁰ Sebastián Villasante and others, "Strengthening European Union fisheries by removing harmful subsidies", Marine Policy 136:104884, February 2022, available at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2021.104884>; and Anna Schuhbauer and others, "The global fisheries subsidies divide between small- and large-scale fisheries", Frontiers in Marine Science 7:539214, 29 September 2020, available at <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2020.539214>.

³¹ *The Second World Ocean Assessment, vol. II* (United Nations publication, 2021).

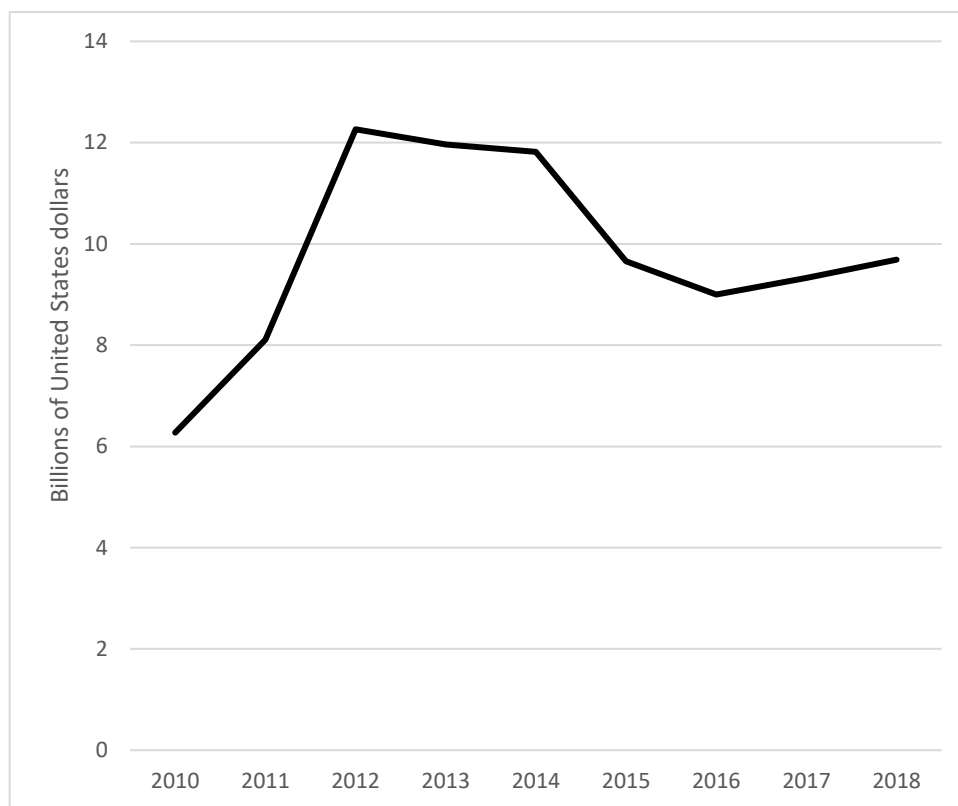
³² UNCTAD, *Advancing the Potential of Sustainable Ocean-based Economies; The Second World Ocean Assessment, vol. II* (United Nations publication, 2021); and U. Rashid Sumaila and others, "Updated estimates and analysis of global fisheries subsidies", Marine Policy 109:103695, November 2019, available at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2019.103695>.

³³ OECD, Fisheries support estimate, 2022, available at https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=FISH_FSE. The figures are underestimates due to underreporting and the non-inclusion of certain forms of non-specific support.

³⁴ OECD, "The OECD Review of Fisheries 2020", available at <https://doi.org/10.1787/7946bc8a-en>.

³⁵ UNCTAD, *Advancing the Potential of Sustainable Ocean-based Economies*.

Figure I
Fisheries support estimate for selected members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and other selected countries, 2010–2018

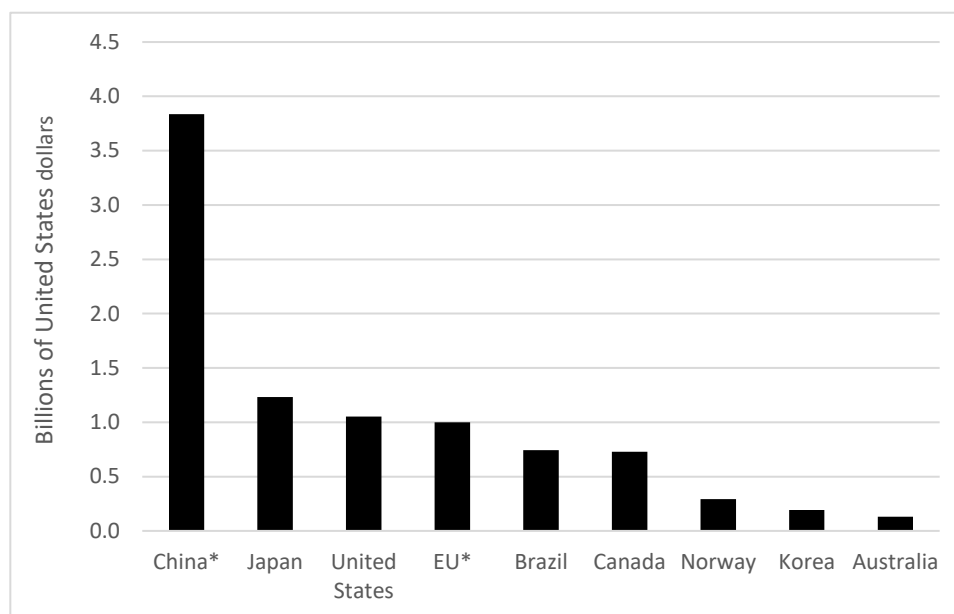


Source: UNCTAD, based on OECD (2022).

15. The largest amounts of cumulative fisheries support are provided by China (\$3.8 billion), Japan (\$1.2 billion), the United States of America (\$1.1 billion) and European Union member States (also about \$1 billion)³⁶ (see figure II).

³⁶ OECD, Fisheries support estimate, 2022, available at https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=FISH_FSE. The figures are underestimates due to underreporting and the non-inclusion of certain forms of non-specific support. These values are accumulative and do not necessarily reflect the objectives of the support or whether it contributes to overfishing.

Figure II
Top 10 countries providing the most fisheries support, 2018



Source: UNCTAD, based on OECD data (2022).

Note: Data for China is from 2017 as no data was available for 2018 when the report was written.

Data for the European Union is limited to countries that reported to OECD.

16. The prohibition and elimination of harmful fisheries subsidies have been under negotiation at WTO since 2001. A WTO draft agreement on fisheries subsidies,³⁷ based on the collective efforts of WTO members, was circulated to WTO ministers in late November 2021 as the basis for negotiating the final outcome at the twelfth Ministerial Conference (which was postponed until June 2022 due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)). Members continue work on the draft, pledging to conclude the negotiations as soon as possible.³⁸ At the fifteenth session of the UNCTAD Conference, the importance of urgently finalizing a WTO agreement on fisheries subsidies was stressed.³⁹

17. Indicator 14.6.1 of the Goals is focused on combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing through the effective implementation of key international instruments designed to measure the progress towards achieving target 14.6.⁴⁰ Implementation of the five principal international instruments employed to combat

³⁷ WTO, “Agreement on fisheries subsidies: draft text”, WT/MIN(21)/W/5, 24 November 2021.

³⁸ See A/76/311; see also WTO, “Draft agreement on fisheries subsidies submitted for ministers’ attention ahead of MC12”, 25 November 2021, available at www.wto.org/english/news_e/news21_e/fish_25nov21_e.htm.

³⁹ TD/541/Add.2; and UNCTAD, “UNCTAD contribution to Part II of the Report of the Secretary-General on Oceans and the Law of the Sea”, 2021.

⁴⁰ As the custodian of Sustainable Development Goals indicator 14.6.1, FAO measures the progress achieved by countries in the degree of implementation of international instruments aiming to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing on the basis of responses by countries to an FAO biannual questionnaire. The indicator has five variables, which are weighted on the basis of their importance in eliminating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing: policy, legislation, institutional framework, institutional operations and procedures. The indicator scores are distributed every two years.

illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing improved globally, with the world score for indicator 14.6.1 rising from 3 out of 5 to 4 out of 5 between 2018 and 2020.⁴¹

C. Target 14.b of the Sustainable Development Goals

18. Target 14.b of the Goals (and its indicator 14.b.1) is focused on small-scale fisheries. These provide livelihoods for millions of people and essential nutrition to billions, and they contribute substantially to household, local and national economies, economic growth, and coastal communities' cultural identity and social structures. They provide at least 40 per cent of global fish catches and employ more than 90 per cent of people working in fisheries value chains (about half of them women, who are mainly engaged in marketing and processing), with an estimated 97 per cent of fishers living in developing countries, and with many small-scale fishing communities experiencing high levels of poverty.⁴²

19. Many coastal communities rely on small-scale fisheries but face competition from industrial fisheries and other sectors, exacerbated by harmful subsidies and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing,⁴³ as well as climate change impacts. The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication provide a policy framework to support small-scale fisheries. The 2022 International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture provides an important milestone to assess progress towards achieving target 14.b of the Goals and share related small-scale fisheries good practices around the world.⁴⁴

20. Indicator 14.b.1 of the Goals measures the “access rights” aspect of target 14.b on the basis of countries' efforts to implement selected key provisions of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication. FAO and other agencies have supported States in implementing the Guidelines as a global, participatory multi-stakeholder framework complementing the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, to support the development of small-scale fisheries communities through a human rights-based approach. Some of the essential tools for target 14.b are: capacity development of fishers and fish workers, including women engaged in post-harvest activities; participatory decision-making; technical assistance; dissemination of information regarding market access requirements and markets; recognition of small-scale fisheries tenure systems and access rights; fisheries resource management support; insurance; safety at sea training; and an enabling and participatory small-scale fisheries legal, regulatory and policy framework.⁴⁵

⁴¹ FAO, *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020*.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ UNCTAD, *Advancing the Potential of Sustainable Ocean-based Economies*.

⁴⁴ FAO, *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020*.

⁴⁵ Ibid.; FAO, “FAO inputs in relation to [A/RES/75/239](#) concerning “oceans and the law of the sea” for the report of the Secretary-General to the seventy-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly”, 14 June 2021; FAO, “Sustainable Development Goals indicators”, 2021, available at www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals/indicators/14b1/en/; and UNCTAD, *Advancing the Potential of Sustainable Ocean-based Economies*. This indicator is assessed every two years on the basis of responses provided by Governments to a questionnaire on: laws, regulations, policies, plans or strategies that specifically target or address the small-scale fisheries sector; any ongoing specific initiatives to implement the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication; and the existence of mechanisms through which small-scale fisheries fishers and fish workers contribute to decision-making processes. Target 14.b and its indicator should equally guide action concerning small-scale inland fisheries. FAO assists Governments and other partners to better understand and report on target 14.b.

III. Challenges and opportunities

21. Capture fisheries production declined slightly from 91.8 million tons in 2019 to 89.9 million tons in 2020, as demand for fish and fish products fell, supply chains were disrupted, and small-scale fishers and their communities, as well as fleets fishing for export, were adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴⁶ The reduced fishing activity resulted in short-term, limited and reversible benefits to certain marine ecosystems and species,⁴⁷ but the easing of controls and surveillance measures and delays in the implementation of management measures due to the pandemic may have increased illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.⁴⁸ Many governments adopted support measures for their fishing sectors, while small-scale fishers, cooperatives, caterers and processors also adjusted their production and activities.⁴⁹ Informal sector workers, migrant workers, ethnic minorities, women and children, and seafarers were particularly affected by COVID-19-related economic disruptions, restrictions on movement and access to accommodation, and the lack of social protection. Reduced employment, lower incomes and limited access to social protection pushed many actors, small producers and businesses to adapt, including through the direct sale of fish and income diversification.⁵⁰

A. Target 14.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals

22. Challenges to the fisheries sector were identified in the Secretary-General's reports on oceans and the law of the sea,⁵¹ as well as in the outcomes of meetings, such as the outcome of the resumed Review Conference in 2016,⁵² the outcomes of the informal consultations of States parties to the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement,⁵³ and the 2021 Committee on Fisheries Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture.⁵⁴ Other relevant reports include the second world ocean assessment by the United Nations,⁵⁵ the report of the High Level Panel for a

⁴⁶ *Impact and Implications of COVID-19 for the Ocean economy and Trade Strategy: Case Studies from Barbados, Belize and Costa Rica* (United Nations publication, 2020); UNCTAD, *Advancing the Potential of Sustainable Ocean-based Economies*; UNCTAD, "UNCTAD contribution to Part II of the report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the Law of the Sea", 2021; FAO, "Final assessment of voluntary commitments assigned to Community of Ocean Action No. 9 – Sustainable Fisheries", 2020; FAO and Worldfish, "Aquatic food systems under COVID-19", 2021; and FAO, "Fishery and aquaculture statistics – global production by production source 1950–2020", forthcoming in 2022, available at www.fao.org/fishery/en/statistics/software/fishstatj.

⁴⁷ See A/76/311; see also United Nations, *Impact and Implications of COVID-19 for the Ocean Economy and Trade Strategy*.

⁴⁸ FAO, "Q&A: COVID-19 pandemic – impact on fisheries and aquaculture", 2020, available at www.fao.org/2019-ncov/q-and-a/impact-on-fisheries-and-aquaculture/en/; FAO and Worldfish, "Aquatic food systems under COVID-19", 2021; and FAO, "Fishery and aquaculture statistics – global production by production source 1950–2020", forthcoming in 2022, available at www.fao.org/fishery/en/statistics/software/fishstatj.

⁴⁹ United Nations, *Impact and Implications of COVID-19 for the ocean economy and trade strategy*.

⁵⁰ See A/76/311; see also FAO and Worldfish, "Aquatic food systems under COVID-19", 2021; and FAO, "Fishery and aquaculture statistics – global production by production source 1950–2020", forthcoming in 2022, available at www.fao.org/fishery/en/statistics/software/fishstatj.

⁵¹ See, for example, A/76/311; A/74/350; A/73/368; A/72/70/Add.1; and A/72/70.

⁵² See A/CONF.210/2016/5, annex, para. 13.

⁵³ Reports of the informal consultations of States parties to the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, available at http://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/fish_stocks_agreement_states_parties.htm.

⁵⁴ FAO, "2021 COFI declaration for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture", available at www.fao.org/3/cb3767en/cb3767en.pdf.

⁵⁵ *The Second World Ocean Assessment, vols. I and II* (United Nations publication, 2021).

Sustainable Ocean Economy,⁵⁶ the FAO 2020 report on the state of world fisheries and aquaculture,⁵⁷ the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2019 special report on the ocean and cryosphere in a changing climate,⁵⁸ the UNCTAD ocean economy studies,⁵⁹ and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs sustainable ocean-based economies report.⁶⁰

23. Other challenges include:

(a) Insufficient quality of catch data and limited availability of fishing-effort data for stock assessment, and inadequate fisheries-sector-related socioeconomic data, in particular for data-limited, multi-species small-scale fisheries;

(b) Insufficient participation in and implementation of international fisheries-related instruments;

(c) Insufficient institutional and human capacity and public and private sector investment for sustainable fisheries management, particularly in developing countries, including: inadequate science-based management; weak governance and institutional capacity; lack of or low levels of data collection and analysis and of monitoring, control and surveillance capacity adversely affecting efforts to address overfishing; and non-compliance with regulations and management frameworks;

(d) Financing gaps for sustainable management, monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement, stock assessment, capacity-building, and the introduction and scaling up of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture;

(e) Insufficient industry transparency and regulatory oversight throughout the value chain;

(f) Unsafe working conditions for fishers and fish workers, safety at sea risks and risks of human rights violations;

(g) Difficulties with transportation cold chains and logistics to ensure food safety, less food waste and lower emissions;

(h) Lack of recognition of the ability of trade-related aspects of Sustainable Development Goal 14 to facilitate positive change;

(i) Knowledge gaps about climate change impacts on the redistribution of commercially important stocks or potentially irreversible shifts in marine ecosystems and processes;

(j) The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and pandemic response measures on the health, livelihood and food security of those dependent on fishing and fishing-related economic sectors;

(k) Insufficient organizational capacity of small-scale fishers and fish workers to engage in fisheries management and governance.

24. The global recognition of the crisis in the oceans, based on science and multilateral political commitment, presents the United Nations system, Governments

⁵⁶ Martin R. Stuchtey and others, *Ocean Solutions That Benefit People, Nature and the Economy – Report of the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy*, World Resources Institute, 2020, p. 4.

⁵⁷ FAO, *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020*.

⁵⁸ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in Changing Climate*, 2019, chap. 5.

⁵⁹ United Nations, *Impact and Implications of COVID-19 for the Ocean Economy and Trade Strategy*; and UNCTAD, *Advancing the Potential of Sustainable Ocean-based Economies*.

⁶⁰ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “Promotion and strengthening of sustainable ocean-based economies”, 2021.

and other oceans stakeholders with the opportunity at the 2022 Oceans Conference to adopt more proactive measures to address fish stock sustainability, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and other factors to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 14, particularly during the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030).

B. Target 14.6 of the Sustainable Development Goals

25. Reaching a multilateral agreement imposing effective disciplines on fisheries subsidies remains a major challenge, involving technical and policy obstacles with regard to eliminating harmful fisheries subsidies, including:

- (a) Lack of official and reliable data on subsidies (including lack of sufficient and proper notification to WTO), particularly in developing countries, and fragmented and non-comparable information on government support practices relating to the fisheries sector;
- (b) Insufficient quality of catch data and limited availability of fishing-effort data for stock assessment, as well as inadequate fisheries-sector-related socioeconomic data;
- (c) Difficulties in gaining consensus at WTO on how to balance the competing interests of disciplining subsidies that harm sustainability and of allowing flexibility subject to sustainability conditions, in different fisheries contexts;
- (d) Differing views on the extent to which, and how, subsidies disciplines should apply to different scales of fishing and different geographical areas, as well as the role and impact of subsidies for different fisheries types, particularly small-scale fisheries;
- (e) Differing views on the approach to, and the content and limits of, special and differential treatment provisions to be included in new disciplines.

C. Target 14.b of the Sustainable Development Goals

26. Access to resources and markets and secure tenure rights are fundamental to sustainable small-scale fisheries and are necessary preconditions for sustainable trade. The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication contain recommendations for ensuring secure access to resources and equitable market access and rights recognition for small-scale fisheries actors.

27. Challenges in relation to access to resources include:

- (a) Lack of appropriate recognition of traditional and informal rights;
- (b) Limited establishment of preferential access zones and potential conflict in relation to conservation measures, such as the establishment of marine protected areas, as well as increased competition from industrial fisheries, aquaculture and other ocean-based economies;
- (c) Insufficient legal frameworks and policies in support of small-scale fisheries, including limited participatory institutional arrangements; protection of women's rights throughout the value chain; limited capacity of small-scale fishers and fish workers, particularly women, to organize and participate in management and the decision-making processes; and low levels of co-management arrangements;

(d) Limited data on the role of small-scale fisheries in sustainable development and the blue economy.

28. Challenges regarding market access by small-scale fisheries include:

(a) Inadequate recognition or protection of tenurial and access rights (both with regard to fishery resources and adjacent land), unequal power relations between different actors along the value chain, knowledge and capacity constraints of individuals and organizations, and other governance difficulties;

(b) Insufficient market-related information, including data about the contribution of small-scale fisheries to livelihoods, trade-related measures, the lack of decent work, unfair conditions and practices, the impact of climate change on fish stock distribution and range shifts, and measures to address post-harvest losses;

(c) Insufficient, inadequate or lack of access to support facilities, services and infrastructure, including financial services;

(d) Gender inequality and a lack of recognition of the role of women, youth, the elderly and other vulnerable communities.

29. To encourage small-scale fisheries actors' engagement in formal markets and to support climate change adaptation in small-scale fisheries communities, the following are opportunities for further work:

(a) Training and capacity development among individuals and organizations, including on science-based fisheries management, market functions, literacy and numeracy, and organizational, technical and leadership skills;

(b) Social protection expansion;

(c) Ecosystem-based adaptation;

(d) Improving integrated coastal management of agricultural and fisheries practices, including ecosystem adaptation, marine spatial planning, community-based programmes, recognition of legitimate tenure rights, and participatory and gender-inclusive decision-making;

(e) Enhancing access to financial services, including loans and insurance;

(f) Using appropriate and improved fishing gear and technology, such as the use of fish aggregating devices.

IV. Existing partnerships

A. Addressing Sustainable Development Goal 14 in an integrated manner

30. Collaboration among States continues to take place in various forums, such as the General Assembly and various international instruments supporting sustainable fisheries, including binding and voluntary commitments, such as the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, the Port State Measures Agreement, the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and related instruments, and regional agreements and organizations. The WTO negotiations on fisheries subsidies disciplines are ongoing.

31. Despite COVID-19, multilateral activities related to Sustainable Development Goal 14 continue. FAO enhanced its role as the custodian agency for Goal 14 and the

related targets and indicators,⁶¹ including through its “blue transformation” programme under the Strategic Framework 2022–2031.⁶² The UNCTAD mandate on the oceans economy and seas, issued to support developing countries, design and implement ocean resource conservation and sustainable use strategies, and promote sustainable trade in ocean-based sectors, was renewed at the fifteenth session of the UNCTAD Conference in 2021.⁶³ In 2019, UNCTAD, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and FAO embarked on an inter-agency plan of action on trade-related aspects of Goal 14 to help countries achieve the trade-related targets of the Goal.⁶⁴ Regional organizations also play an important role in achieving Goal 14.

32. The United Nations Global Compact developed the Sustainable Ocean Principles as a tool for entities in the private sector pursuing sustainable uses of the ocean.⁶⁵ Civil society organizations are also active in partnerships in relation to Goal 14, including by actively providing inputs to the Ocean Conference.⁶⁶

33. On the Sustainable Development Goals Partnership Platform, Goal 14 and the Ocean Conference together have 1,652 registered voluntary commitments and multi-stakeholder partnerships, with sustainable management of fisheries among the most common registered activities.⁶⁷ Communities of Ocean Action were launched at the first Ocean Conference.⁶⁸ The Community of Ocean Action No. 9 is intended to support the achievement of the targets and voluntary commitments concerning the sustainable management of fisheries by exchanging progress reports, experiences, lessons learned and good practices.⁶⁹

⁶¹ FAO, “FAO Working for SDG 14: Healthy oceans for food security, nutrition and resilient communities”, 2017.

⁶² See FAO, “Strategic Framework 2022–2031”, October 2021, available at www.fao.org/3/cb7099en/cb7099en.pdf.

⁶³ TF/519/Add.2 and A/76/311. The UNCTAD approach to the creation of an oceans economy is based on five pillars, available at <https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/ditc-ted-21062021-Ocean-economy-pillars.pdf>.

⁶⁴ Further information is available at <https://unctad.org/en/pages/MeetingDetails.aspx?meetingid=2169>.

⁶⁵ United Nations Global Compact, “Sustainable Ocean Principles”, available at <https://d306pr3pise04h.cloudfront.net/docs/publications%2FSustainable+Ocean+Principles.pdf>. See also the United Nations Global Compact and the World Wide Fund for Nature, “Setting science-based targets in the seafood sector: best practices to date”, January 2022.

⁶⁶ For other examples of civil society organizations, academia, private sector entities and international organizations undertaking activities in support of Goal 14, please see the various stakeholder inputs provided in 2020 and 2022. Inputs to the 2020 Ocean Conference interactive dialogues on making fisheries sustainable and providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets are available at https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/19sg_UiUckDs7u6WMPHiiNYKaP5sBlGneKYIdOje6FQ/edit#gid=2026189465. Inputs provided in 2022 are available at <http://bit.ly/StakeholderInputsOnlineConsultationDeclaration>. See also www.un.org/en/conferences/ocean2022/preparation/stakeholders. Contributions and statements from United Nations Member States and United Nations agencies are available at www.un.org/en/conferences/ocean2022/documentation and at www.un.org/en/conferences/ocean2022/preparation/statements.

⁶⁷ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “The Sustainable Development Goals Partnership Platform”, available at <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/browse>. Filtered for Goal 14 and the Ocean Conference. See also FAO, “Final assessment of voluntary commitments assigned to Community of Ocean Action No. 9 – Sustainable Fisheries”, 2020.

⁶⁸ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “Communities of Ocean Action for supporting implementation of SDG 14”, available at <https://sdgs.un.org/topics/oceans-and-seas/coas>.

⁶⁹ FAO, “Final assessment of voluntary commitments assigned to Community of Ocean Action No. 9 – Sustainable Fisheries”, 2020; and United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “Communities of Ocean Action for supporting implementation of SDG 14”, available at <https://sdgs.un.org/topics/oceans-and-seas/coas>.

B. Target 14.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals

34. Many partnerships work on fisheries issues involving a range of stakeholders and modalities.⁷⁰ These include countries jointly managing their fisheries, including regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements or other mechanisms, such as the Vessel Day Scheme implemented by Pacific countries that are parties to the Nauru Agreement.

35. National Governments also partner with other stakeholders. For example, the Coral Triangle Initiative on coral reefs, fisheries and food security has six member States, development partners and a 2020 Regional Plan of Action.⁷¹ Coordination and synergies among regional and international organizations have also occurred, such as the cooperation between regional seas conventions and action plans and regional fisheries bodies, including the collective arrangement between the Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic and the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission and the memorandum of understanding between the Mediterranean Action Plan Secretariat to the Barcelona Convention and the FAO General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, which have advanced ecosystem approaches. The secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity, UNEP and FAO are cooperating to facilitate improved dialogue and collaboration across regional mechanisms through the Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogues. The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora has partnerships with other international organizations to deliver capacity-building activities to member States. FAO and the Convention on Biological Diversity engage in joint efforts to enhance guidance and support to countries to achieve Goal 14 (sustainable fisheries) and Goal 15 (biodiversity). The post-2020 global biodiversity framework is being negotiated under the Convention on Biological Diversity, including on proposed targets relevant to marine ecosystems and resource use.⁷² The cooperation among the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and FAO on illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing concerns safety at sea, protection of the marine environment, and work on labour standards and working conditions in the fishing industry and in fisheries in general.

36. United Nations system agencies have also partnered with other stakeholders. For example, the Global Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction Programme (Common Oceans Programme) promotes efficient and sustainable management of fisheries resources and biodiversity conservation to achieve the global targets agreed to in international forums.

37. There are currently several partnerships supporting the implementation of the Port State Measures Agreement that include States, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, regional fishery bodies and others. FAO has a global capacity development umbrella programme in support of implementing the Port State Measures Agreement and complementary instruments to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

38. The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, FAO and regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements have collaborated to support member

⁷⁰ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “The Sustainable Development Goals Partnership Platform”, available at <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/browse>.

⁷¹ See www.coraltriangleinitiative.org/.

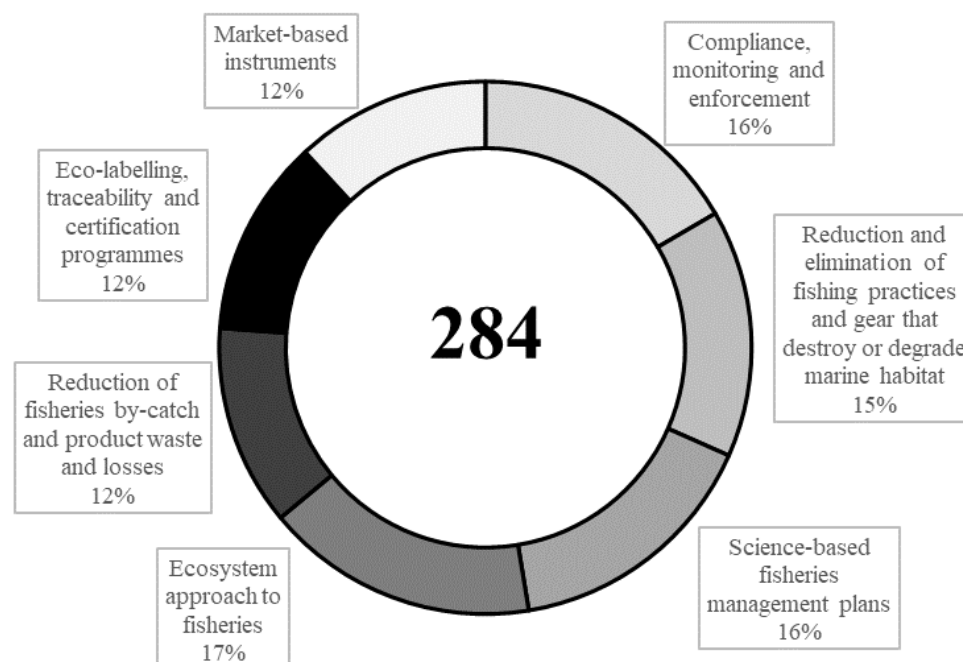
⁷² CBD/WG2020/3/3.

States on the conservation and management of sharks.⁷³ The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora worked with UNCTAD on Blue BioTrade in selected marine species.⁷⁴ International NGOs have helped developing countries manage their fisheries and are spearheading partnerships on social and environmental issues concerning fisheries and on sustainable consumption and production.

39. As at 15 October 2020, there were 284 voluntary commitments related to target 14.4 under Community of Ocean Action No. 9⁷⁵ (see figure III).

Figure III

Community of Ocean Action No. 9 voluntary commitments related to target 14.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals



Source: FAO, “Final assessment of voluntary commitments assigned to Community of Ocean Action No. 9 – Sustainable Fisheries”, 2020.

Note: Distribution of commitment types related to target 14.4 across all Community of Ocean Action No. 9 voluntary commitments, as at 15 October 2020.

C. Target 14.6 of the Sustainable Development Goals

40. Several initiatives and partnerships are relevant to the WTO negotiations held to discipline harmful fisheries subsidies. These include the “road map” initiative launched at the fourteenth session of UNCTAD in 2016, spearheaded by FAO, UNCTAD and UNEP, along with the discussions on fisheries subsidies during the

⁷³ The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, “Conservation and management of sharks”, 2019, available at <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/document/E-Res-12-06-R18.pdf>.

⁷⁴ UNCTAD, “Blue BioTrade: Harnessing Marine Trade to Support Ecological Sustainability and Economic Equity”, 2018, available at <https://unctad.org/en/pages/PublicationWebflyer.aspx?publicationid=2272>.

⁷⁵ FAO, “Final assessment of voluntary commitments assigned to Community of Ocean Action No. 9 – Sustainable Fisheries”, 2020.

Ocean Forums organized jointly with UNCTAD,⁷⁶ and partnerships focusing on harmful fisheries subsidies and studies on these partnerships' effectiveness and impact.

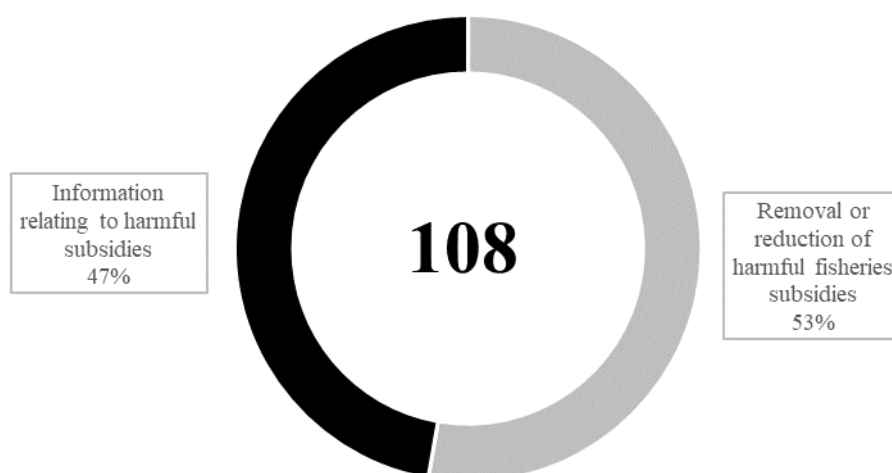
41. UNCTAD, FAO and UNEP are collaborating to provide support, technical assistance and capacity-building to Member States in regard to relevant United Nations fisheries agreements and oceans economy initiatives.⁷⁷

42. Several NGOs are working on fisheries subsidies. The International Institute for Sustainable Development provides analysis and support to the multilateral and regional work on trade rules and policies that support sustainable fishing.⁷⁸ The Pew Charitable Trusts supports work on securing an agreement on fisheries subsidies.⁷⁹

43. Various stakeholders indicated 108 voluntary commitments in Community of Ocean Action No. 9 related to target 14.6 as at 15 October 2020⁸⁰ (see figure IV).

Figure IV

Community of Ocean Action No. 9 voluntary commitments related to target 14.6



Source: FAO, “Final assessment of voluntary commitments assigned to Community of Ocean Action No. 9 – Sustainable Fisheries”, 2020.

Note: Distribution of commitment types related to target 14.6 across all Community of Ocean Action No. 9 voluntary commitments, as at 15 October 2020.

⁷⁶ See UNCTAD, “1st Oceans Forum on trade-related aspects of Sustainable Development Goal 14”, 2017, available at <https://unctad.org/en/pages/MeetingDetails.aspx?meetingid=1299>; UNCTAD, “2nd Oceans Forum on trade-related aspects of Sustainable Development Goal 14”, 2018, available at <https://unctad.org/en/pages/MeetingDetails.aspx?meetingid=1831>; UNCTAD, “3rd Oceans Forum on trade-related aspects of Sustainable Development Goal 14”, 2019, available at <https://unctad.org/meeting/3rd-oceans-forum-trade-related-aspects-sustainable-development-goal-14>; and UNCTAD, “4th Oceans Forum on trade-related aspects of Sustainable Development Goal 14”, 2022, available at <https://unctad.org/meeting/4th-oceans-forum-trade-related-aspects-sustainable-development-goal-14>.

⁷⁷ UNCTAD, “UNCTAD contribution to Part II of the Report of the Secretary-General on Oceans and the Law of the Sea”, 2021.

⁷⁸ International Institute for Sustainable Development, “Global Subsidies Initiative – Fisheries Subsidies”, 2021, available at www.iisd.org/gsi/what-we-do/focus-areas/fisheries-subsidies.

⁷⁹ Pew Charitable Trusts, “Project Reducing Harmful Fisheries Subsidies”, 2021, available at www.pewtrusts.org/en/projects/reducing-harmful-fisheries-subsidies.

⁸⁰ FAO, “Final assessment of voluntary commitments assigned to Community of Ocean Action No. 9 – Sustainable Fisheries”, 2020.

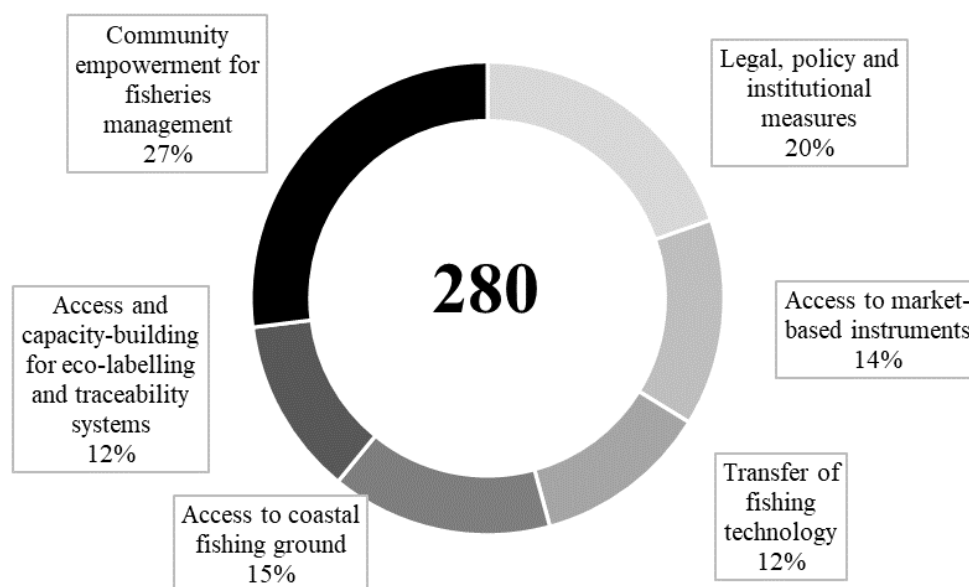
D. Target 14.b of the Sustainable Development Goals

44. The FAO Small-Scale Fisheries Umbrella Programme supports target 14.b of the Goals through implementation at the local and national levels of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication and enables FAO to support regional policy processes. Small-scale fisheries organizations, civil society, bilateral donors, regional organizations, academia, intergovernmental and United Nations organizations, national Governments, and philanthropic foundations helped develop the Guidelines, support sustainable small-scale fisheries and promote and use the Guidelines. Some regional organizations in the Mediterranean, the Eastern Atlantic, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean have held activities or developed action plans concerning small-scale fisheries. UNCTAD and the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea implemented a joint project to help developing States create evidence-based and policy-coherent oceans economy and trade strategies and to achieve economic benefits from the sustainable use of marine resources.⁸¹ A global “blue foods” coalition evolved from the United Nations Food Systems Summit and aligned with Ocean Action 2030 to advance small-scale fisheries as part of efforts to enhance the food and nutrition security and resiliency of coastal communities.

45. As at 15 October 2020, there were 280 voluntary commitments in Community of Ocean Action No. 9 related to target 14.b⁸² (see figure V).

Figure V

Community of Ocean Action no. 9 voluntary commitments related to target 14.b



Source: FAO, “Final assessment of voluntary commitments assigned to Community of Ocean Action No. 9 – Sustainable Fisheries”, 2020.

Note: Distribution of commitment types related to target 14.b across all Community of Ocean Action No. 9 voluntary commitments, as at 15 October 2020.

⁸¹ See General Assembly resolutions 74/19 and 76/71. See also UNCTAD, “Evidence-based and policy coherent Oceans Economy and Trade Strategies”, 2018, available at <https://unctad.org/project/evidence-based-and-policy-coherent-oceans-economy-and-trade-strategies>.

⁸² FAO, “Final assessment of voluntary commitments assigned to Community of Ocean Action No. 9 – Sustainable Fisheries”, 2020.

V. Possible areas for new partnerships

46. The authors of submissions to the 2022 Ocean Conference suggested the following areas for new partnerships among diverse stakeholders:

(a) Develop, enhance and update global data standards for fisheries and aquaculture products and enhance multidisciplinary fisheries-related data collection and analysis, particularly for small-scale fishers, including: relevant socioeconomic information, targeted adaptation and economic diversification measures needing new data; analysis of climate and health-related (i.e. COVID-19) vulnerabilities, risks, available opportunities and response options; and information, experiences and good practices on the implementation of sustainable fisheries rules and standards;

(b) Explore multi-stakeholder activities and partnership mechanisms such as the workshop on bottom fishing in August 2022, the resumed United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement Review Conference in 2023, the Private Sector Mechanism of the Committee on World Food Security, and other initiatives;⁸³

(c) Assist Governments in identifying harmful fisheries subsidies, document their ecological and socioeconomic impacts on economies, fisheries and international markets, reinvigorate efforts to reform trade policies, including fisheries subsidies schemes, at all levels, and increase cooperation between United Nations agencies, trade agencies and other organizations to gather and analyse existing data on fisheries subsidies and public support measures;

(d) Assist developing countries with diversifying their sustainable fisheries and other marine resources production bases for international trade and connect them to relevant markets; enhance inclusive connectivity, sustainable transport and resilient fishing port infrastructure at the lowest possible cost; understand fisheries value chains and the use of sustainability standards; transfer and disseminate the most recent technologies and best fishing practices to minimize fishing's adverse impacts, including through fishery learning exchanges; and promote infrastructural and technical innovation for sustainable fisheries management;

(e) Support the “formalization” of the fisheries sector in developing countries and enhance social protection schemes, safety at sea arrangements, the promotion and protection of human rights of fishers and fish workers, sector diversification, and capacity development of small-scale fisheries organizations, so that they can effectively participate in co-management, governance, marketing and development processes;

(f) Combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and unsustainable fishing practices, promote the development of assessment methods (to assess stocks and ecosystems) and harvest control strategies and the use of voluntary sustainability certification standards to address illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and assist in market access, and support countries in assessing illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and non-sustainable activities;

⁸³ See, for example, the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea website, available at www.un.org/depts/los/index.htm; the Private Sector Mechanism of the Committee on World Food Security, available at <https://agrifood.net/private-sector-mechanism>; University of British Columbia, Institute for Oceans and Fisheries: Partnerships, available at <https://oceans.ubc.ca/research/partnerships/>; University of Maine, Marine Fisheries Partnership, available at <https://umaine.edu/mfp/>; University of Tasmania, Seafood Industry Partnerships, available at www.imas.utas.edu.au/research/fisheries-and-aquaculture/seafood-industry; and FAO – General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, Partners, available at www.fao.org/gfcm/about/partners/es/.

(g) Promote awareness, capacity-building and institutional collaboration at all levels to improve implementation of the international legal framework for sustainable fisheries, including strengthening collaboration at the regional level with the broader Regional Economic Communities such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Caribbean Community, the Southern African Development Community and also the Indian Ocean Commission by linking fisheries management to cross-management instruments, enhancing cooperation on implementing the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora provisions for marine species listed under that Convention, and enhancing partnerships relating to oceans, the blue economy, trade and sustainability, especially those spearheaded by UNCTAD, FAO, UNEP, WTO, and the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

47. Transforming fisheries through better management with an ecosystem-based approach and the effective management of all seascapes is an opportunity to rebuild depleted fisheries, make fisheries more sustainable, provide access for small-scale fishers to marine resources management and markets, combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, decrease fishing pressure, eliminate harmful fishing subsidies, and increase environmental safeguards. Reforming marine fisheries and aquaculture governance across all of these dimensions is essential.⁸⁴

A. Target 14.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals

48. Fish stocks sustainability measures are set out in the annual General Assembly resolutions on sustainable fisheries⁸⁵ and in the outcomes of informal consultations of States parties to the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement and reports of the Secretary-General. For example, the report of the thirteenth round of informal consultations of States parties in 2018⁸⁶ contained several recommendations for improving the science-policy interface in fisheries, while the report of the fourteenth round of informal consultations of States parties⁸⁷ was focused on reviewing the performance of regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements.

49. In addition, the following recommendations are important:

(a) Urgently restore depleted fisheries and sensitive marine habitats and protect threatened and endangered species, including by prohibiting new or expanded exploitation of krill and mesopelagic and deep-sea species, and put in place recovery plans for the most threatened species;

(b) Ensure that fisheries are sustainable through the use of area-based management tools such as the ecosystem approach and marine spatial planning as part of integrated management of the ocean and seascape, adopting the FAO “management is the best conservation” narrative to support the effective assessment and the sustainable, equitable and ecosystem-based management of all fisheries, using a

⁸⁴ FAO, “Sustainable Development Goals indicators”, 2021, available at www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals/indicators/14.4.1/en/; and United Nations, *Impact and Implications of COVID-19 for the Ocean Economy and Trade Strategy* (United Nations publication, 2020).

⁸⁵ See, for example, General Assembly resolutions 74/19, 75/89 and 76/71.

⁸⁶ Informal consultations of States parties to the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, “Report of the thirteenth round of informal consultations of States parties”, ICSP13/UNFSA/INF.2, 31 July 2018, available at www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/ICSP13/ICSP13_final_report.pdf.

⁸⁷ Informal consultations of States parties to the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, “Report of the fourteenth round of informal consultations of States parties”, ICSP14/UNFSA/INF.3, 15 August 2019, available at www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/ICSP14/ReportICSP14.pdf.

precautionary approach when information is unavailable or incomplete due to data limitations and other external factors, and ensuring resilience and ecosystem functions;

(c) Promote food security, poverty eradication and gender inclusion by immediately implementing the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication;

(d) Use periodic World Ocean Assessments as tools for informed decision-making at all levels;

(e) Reinforce international and regional governance mechanisms for sustainable fisheries management and enhance subregional and regional cooperation, including through a binding prohibition on subsidies for fishing that negatively affect overfished stocks, as well as on fishing vessels listed for illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing;

(f) Support the implementation of the inter-agency plan of action on trade-related aspects of Goal 14 developed by UNCTAD, FAO and UNEP to accelerate the implementation of trade-related aspects of the Goal by 2030, and implement recommendations developed by the Oceans Forum on trade-related aspects of Goal 14 led by UNCTAD, FAO, UNEP and partners;

(g) Mobilize resources for programmes, long-term strategies and investments to strengthen fisheries assessment and management systems, particularly in developing countries and small-scale fisheries, and strengthen the sector's capacity to adapt to the impacts of climate change and COVID-19;

(h) Replicate and adapt successful reality-based fisheries policies and measures and create mechanisms to effectively develop and implement policies and regulations in fisheries with poor management,⁸⁸ and improve policy synergies for sustainable development;

(i) Coordinate global capacity-building programmes to improve fisheries sustainability, focusing on regions where achieving sustainability is challenging, or where fisheries' sustainability status is unknown, and paying close attention to data-limited fisheries in developing regions;

(j) Upgrade value chains to ensure the social, economic and environmental viability of aquatic food systems by reducing pre- and post-harvest loss and waste products and adopting and implementing internationally agreed safety and quality standards to improve fish processing, distribution and consumption;

(k) Promote sustainable fisheries-derived fish and fish products consumption, and ensure that fish are considered in national and global food security and nutrition strategies in the context of sustainable and transformative food systems;

(l) Develop and provide guidelines for sustainable aquaculture and mariculture growth;

(m) Explore the use of public regulatory and private sector approaches to make fisheries management more sustainable;

(n) Enhance fish trade value chain industry transparency and oversight for food security and sustainable growth, while integrating the fragmented fish and seafood supply chain and increasing data collection and analysis;

(o) Align global and national policy frameworks to emphasize transparency and good governance by companies and suppliers as a requirement to operate;

⁸⁸ FAO, *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020*.

promote the use of new technology and technological innovations, including digital tools and advanced analytics, to enable seafood chain traceability; and increase transparency regarding seafood capture and the management of aquaculture production. Enhance production and promote consumer education on the importance of sustainable seafood;

(p) Develop and adopt national legally binding policies for fisheries management plans that must: (i) be required for all fisheries that appreciably impact marine wildlife; (ii) be based on the best available scientific advice; (iii) prohibit overfishing through effective management measures; (iv) require rebuilding in the case of depleted fisheries; and (iv) be designed for long-term ecosystem sustainability;

(q) Ensure proper stakeholder engagement, including small-scale fisheries representation, in the design of fisheries policies, rules and regulations;

(r) Develop global standards for the exchange of all available data and knowledge of fisheries resource use, including prompt publication of key data, such as fishing vessel locations, fishing vessel permits, fish stock status, catch levels and by-catch levels;

(s) Enhance scientific evidence-based stock assessments and management for more sustainable outcomes;

(t) Put in place procedures to protect marine species listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora; support the sustainability, legality and traceability of their international trade; and provide capacity-building and continued development of practical tools and guidance materials to assist developing countries;

(u) Recognize the role of an effectively implemented legally binding regulatory framework for marine species at risk from international commercial trade in strengthening sustainable fisheries management;

(v) Prohibit destructive fishing practices, such as bottom-trawling and blast fishing, and promote gears and techniques that minimize the catch of non-target species;

(w) Develop programmes and activities to help fisheries sector workers and small-scale fishers adjust to the impacts of COVID-19 on their livelihood.

50. Recommendations to reduce illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing include the following:

(a) Push for rapid worldwide ratification and implementation of fisheries-sector-related international agreements by developing a road map within the United Nations system at the highest level and using mechanisms such as UN-Oceans and a chart containing all instruments related to fisheries;

(b) Ensure joint work and commitment by the secretariats of FAO, ILO and IMO to raise awareness about their collaborative work on illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and related matters;

(c) Ensure transparency on actual vessel ownership and limitations on renaming and reflagging to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, including through registration, licensing and monitoring systems;

(d) Keep vessel and fishery registry systems up to date and publicly available in an electronic database containing relevant information such as gear type, vessel length, gross tonnage, hold capacity, species authorized, a unique vessel identifier, licences, access payment and vessel ownership;

- (e) Deploy and implement satellite and related vessel monitoring solutions to aid fisheries enforcement. Employ alternative methodologies to monitor fisheries catch and by-catch;
- (f) Collect landings data for all fisheries in a systematic way;
- (g) Increase official development assistance for sustainable fisheries management, small-scale fisheries and the creation of ocean-based goods and services sectors.

B. Target 14.6 of the Sustainable Development Goals

51. Recommendations for the elimination of harmful fisheries subsidies include the following:

- (a) Strengthen through capacity-building and technical assistance the reporting, monitoring and surveillance of fisheries subsidies at the global, regional and national levels;
- (b) Reach a positive outcome on fisheries subsidies by the time of the twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference as a matter of priority;
- (c) Encourage the inclusion of fisheries subsidies provisions in other trade agreements, including at the regional and bilateral levels, to strengthen coherence and dialogue between the trade, environmental and fisheries management communities;
- (d) Encourage national Governments to consider redirecting existing fisheries subsidies to support fisheries management, economic diversification, community education and the emergence of a sustainable ocean economy;
- (e) Enhance inter-agency cooperation to gather and analyse existing data on fisheries subsidies and public support measures, and extend cooperation among bilateral and multilateral donors in providing technical assistance and capacity-building to developing countries, particularly least developed countries, to implement new fisheries subsidies disciplines and support measures, such as stock assessment, monitoring, control and surveillance, and the making of illegal, unreported and unregulated determinations.

C. Target 14.b of the Sustainable Development Goals

52. Some recommendations additional to those contained in the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication for ensuring access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets include the following:

- (a) Support the gender-sensitive and inclusive development of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, cooperatives and other community organizations, and small-scale fisheries actors; support appropriate infrastructure and capacity development to improve access to markets and participation in relevant decision-making processes, for a fair distribution of benefits, enhanced livelihoods and food security and nutrition; and promote gender inclusivity in fisheries-related decision-making, data collection, and policymaking and implementation;
- (b) Promote sustainable practices and value enhancement, access to financial services (such as credit and microfinance, savings services, and payment and remittance services), business management skills and robust fishery management systems, to improve livelihoods and prevent overfishing;

- (c) Enhance efforts towards social sustainability in fisheries and aquaculture production, including the promotion of decent work, the protection of human rights, safety at sea, gender-inclusive decision-making, and access to social protection programmes for fishers and their communities (particularly in small island developing countries and least developed countries);
- (d) Deploy good practices for small-scale fisheries actors, so their voices may be heard in regional and national dialogues;
- (e) Recognize the legitimate tenure rights of indigenous and local fisher communities to their marine resources for livelihood and sociocultural well-being, and incorporate ancestral, indigenous and local knowledge in decision-making;
- (f) Conduct awareness-raising campaigns for fishers, community stakeholders and government officials to generate support for small-scale fisheries;
- (g) Develop and implement a scaling-up framework for good practices and local-scale successes through replication and diffusion, embedding into policy and promoting the effectiveness of bridging institutions and collective learning;
- (h) Organize peer-to-peer learning between small-scale fisheries communities;
- (i) Support and empower communities through co-management and participatory community management approaches and the use of traditional knowledge;
- (j) Prioritize access for sustainable small-scale fishing, prevent industrial threats, and recognize and promote community-based fisheries resource management within territorial seas;
- (k) Discuss specific mechanisms for preferential and facilitated access to markets for low-impact fishing techniques and fisheries with a low risk of human rights abuses;
- (l) Explore using information and communications technology to expand small-scale fisheries opportunities in areas such as safety, the sharing of local knowledge, transparency and accountability, market access, capacity-building and governance, and the use of human rights-based approaches;
- (m) Encourage meaningful engagement by private sector actors with due diligence plans to address human rights issues within seafood supply chains, using standards and certification schemes for their corporate social responsibility strategy, data reporting, collection and sharing;
- (n) Conduct reviews and reforms of legal and policy frameworks to support small-scale fisheries;
- (o) Enhance multidisciplinary data collection and analysis and related capacity development.

VII. Guiding questions

53. The following guiding questions may be used to inform the dialogue:

- (a) What is the role of successful multi-country and multi-stakeholder partnerships for innovative fisheries management in: (i) addressing overfishing and restoring fish stocks in the shortest time feasible to levels that can produce maximum biologically sustainable yields; (ii) curbing illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing on the high seas and in situations where monitoring and surveillance capacity is limited; and (iii) addressing harmful fisheries subsidies?

- (b) What innovative targeted programmes or activities are needed to support enhanced fisheries sector adaptation to the impacts of climate change and recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- (c) How can the transition from single-species-based management to multispecies-based management that protects ecosystems be undertaken?
- (d) How can the positive opportunities available through sustainable trade be better leveraged to advance Goal 14 and other Sustainable Development Goals?
- (e) How can Governments and businesses work together to fully trace seafood in a way that does not create barriers to trade for small-scale fisheries and artisanal fishers?
- (f) How can the meaningful participation of small-scale artisanal fishers and fish workers, especially in developing countries, be ensured and facilitated within fisheries sector governance structures, including through open dialogue and transparent decision-making?
- (g) What are the barriers to intergovernmental agreement to discipline harmful and counterproductive fisheries subsidies cooperatively, and how do we overcome them?
- (h) How can stakeholder involvement and cooperation be increased to facilitate innovative systems, techniques and practices for sustainable fisheries?
- (i) How can the implementation of voluntary commitments made by stakeholders at United Nations high-level events be monitored?
- (j) How can social protection, decent work, safety at sea, tenure security, gender inclusivity and the human rights of workers in the fisheries sector and small-scale fishers be provided and promoted?
- (k) How can scientific information and data with respect to fish stocks and sustainable fisheries, including socioeconomic data and the impacts of climate change on fish stocks and distribution, be enhanced and made freely available to all stakeholders, especially in developing countries?
- (l) How can technology be used to make seafood supply chains more sustainable in social, economic and environmental terms?
- (m) How can implementation of relevant international legal instruments requiring the sustainable management of the world's fisheries be strengthened?
- (n) How can key constraints on the effective implementation and enforcement of national fisheries policy, such as budget or capacity constraints, knowledge gaps or political will, be addressed?
- (o) How can increased transparency, including traceability and certification, facilitate better practices in policy and implementation?
- (p) How can the implementation of small-scale fisheries co-management systems be strengthened?
- (q) How can capacities for multidisciplinary approaches to sustainable fisheries management and governance be strengthened to enhance sustainable development?